

REMARKS

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1 and 13 are amended. No new matter is added. Claims 2 and 7 remain cancelled. Claims 1, 3-6, and 8-13 are pending and under consideration.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. §102/103

Claims 1, 3-6, 8, and 10-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,898,404 to Sakai et al. (hereinafter "Sakai"). Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0175208 by Ichida et al. ("Ichida").

Sakai and Ichida teach "carrier-removing techniques" in which the toner is melted by increasing the temperature of the toner images to a temperature which is higher than the softening temperature of the resin in the toner solution. See, for example, col. 4, lines 30-85 of Sakai. The techniques disclosed in the prior art are described in the Background Art section (e.g. on page 2, paragraph [0004]). In the melt process, toner particles, which are a solid component contained in the liquid developer, are melted by application of heat so that the toner image is transferred onto a printing medium using the adhesive force of the toner particles themselves. However, such melt transfer processes continue to have problems as noted on page 5, lines 2-11.

Independent claims 1 and 13 are amended herewith to recite "wherein the toner image is transferred onto the printing medium while the controlled dynamic viscoelasticity of the toner image is maintained." The amended claims clarify features differentiating the claimed subject matter from the techniques of Sakai and Ichida. Specifically, in the claimed apparatus, during the image transfer process, the viscoelasticity of the toner is maintained. See, for example, paragraphs [0013]-[0017]. Therefore, independent claims 1 and 13 and claims 2-12 depending from claim 1 are patentable over the cited prior art.

CONCLUSION

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.


Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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